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National Dark-Sky Week Celebrates the Stars

Astronomy enthusiasts across the country will showcase the starry night during National Dark-Sky Week, celebrated this year from April 23rd to 30th. Individuals and businesses are encouraged to dim their outdoor lighting to bring out the beauty of the night sky.

High-school student Jennifer Barlow founded this event in 2003 out of concern over increasing light pollution, the “glow” from artificial lighting that frequently blots out all but the brightest stars. Endorsed by the International Dark-Sky Association, American Astronomical Society, and the Astronomical League, National Dark-Sky Week creates awareness about light pollution and encourages better lighting practices.

“Not only does light pollution have detrimental effects on the night sky, but it also disrupts the natural environment and wastes energy,” Barlow explains. “No significant reduction in the amount of light pollution can be made unless a great number of people start turning off unnecessary outdoor lights.”

On April 26th (if cloudy, April 28th), Barlow will lead a stargazing event on The Lawn at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. “National Dark-Sky Week is a great opportunity to dust off that old telescope in the attic and share in the wonder of the universe that has been part of the human tradition for thousands of years,” notes Barlow. Be sure to not turn out lights that are necessary for public safety, she cautions, and when going stargazing, carry a red-tinted flashlight and stay in a large group.

Robert Gent, president of the Astronomical League, a federation of 275 astronomical societies with nearly 17,000 members, says, “This is a great way to raise awareness about the problems and solutions of light pollution. If we use the right amount of light only when and where it’s needed, we see better, save energy, and preserve the beauty of our night skies.”

For more information, please visit: www.ndsw.org

For supporting illustrations, go to: www.darksky.org/newsroom/pres-rel.html

To find an astronomy club in your area, visit: NightSkyMag.com/clubdirectory.html